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Morgan





The Boy Who Brought Christmas



Louis from Uncle Ed and Aunt Adamine.

The Boy Who Brought Christmas

by

Alice Morgan

Illustrated by

John Jackson

Garden City New York
Doubleday, Page
& Company
1911

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The Boy Who Brought Christmas

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The Boy Who Brought Christmas

The Boy Who Brought Christmas

I

THE ITINERANT CHRISTMAS TREE

OLD MAN Ledbetter came jolting along the stony mountain road in an ox cart, the tin-tipped ends of the shoe-string that confined his plaited beard dancing upon his breast, his hazel whipstock lying at his feet, and a hard, stumpy hand spread out upon either knee to hold himself steady. Without any gee-hawing on his part his yoked steeds turned at the ford and staggered clumsily into

the Junaluska. In midstream a shallow swirl of water came circling about his feet, but, though he may have pressed his hands harder upon his knees, the only perceptible preparation he made for a possible submerging was the shifting of his tobacco into the other cheek.

But from the footlog below, a call, piping but authoritative, challenged his attention.

"Hi, gran'daddy! he didn't cross the log; you reckon he waded the branch? Dixie and me's done lost the trail!"

"Gee up," the old man reached for his whip and was soon upon the sandy *terra firma* of the other side, submissively awaiting his grandson's pleasure.

"Here, sir, here!" The puzzled Dixie had his nose pressed down to an equivocal impression where the sand of the road had spread itself



"The puzzled Dixie had his nose pressed down to an equivocal impression where the sand of the road had spread itself through the weedy border"

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through the weedy border. "Now foller, old boy; foller I say!"

The gesture of the grimy little hand was imperative, and Dixie sniffed among the dried weeds; then, closely nosing the ground, circled among the cart wheels but, baffled, squatted whimpering upon his haunches.

"You-all trackin' a rabbit, Grover Cleveland?" The old man facetiously scrutinized both dog and boy.

In the North Carolina mountains there were in the time of my story and still are many namesakes of the great democrat, but our little hero was recognized far and wide as the child of the party. A sturdy, clear-eyed, true-hearted little mountaineer, the party was proud of him and no one ever gave him anything less than his full Christian name.

He was an orphan and grandmotherless; he and his grandfather lived alone, with no woman to keep them comfortable. These facts alone

would have secured for him abundant sympathy from a simple-hearted, kindly people; but, in addition to these titles to favour, his grandfather was respected as an upright man and one of the oldest and richest residents of the county, owning many acres of land — not of richest quality to be sure — but as good as any for enumeration. So for miles around the child was welcomed into every mountain cabin, and no home so poor that he was permitted to leave it without some token of its owner's kindly interest, a pair of home-spun, home-knit stockings or mittens or a needed patch upon jacket or trousers.

He was a very small boy to be out in the woods alone with his dog; for, though the sunny slopes were warm, deciduous foliage lay rustling or sodden upon the ground and snow whitened the shaded clefts and hollows of the higher peaks. His old soft hat covered only the back of

his head and in front of it a fringe of blond hair bristled aggressively above blue eyes that scintillated with excitement. He wore clumsy copper-toed shoes and warm stockings wrinkled about his ankles, the dangling ends of the parti-coloured strings that gartered them showing below the short patched trousers.

"No!" he cried disdainfully, as if he had years ago lost interest in small game, "it's old Sandy Claus! Cap'n Wiley says he's got a den somewheres up on the Bald. He's been down to the Pistopals' meetin'-house and left 'em a whole pack of things and they're a-goin' to hang every last one of 'em on to a tree; and a-Chrisamus all the Pistopal girls and boys is goin' to pick 'em off for keeps. But he ain't left nary thing for the Methdises, or the Presaterians or the Red-Baptises or the Yaller-Baptises. Don't you reckon that's a low-down trick, gran'daddy?

He was down yer last night agin with another pack o' things for 'em and he come afoot this time for me and Dixie's tracked him; we've done follered his tracks to the ford but we can't strike his trail on t'other side. Git out, gran'daddy, and help us!"

"Yaas, Grover Cleveland, granddad'll shore do what he kin for you," the old man kept a serious face and began a clumsy descent, "but what you aim to do when you come on to him? You aim to clean him out?"

"No, I ain't goin' to tech nary thing 'thout he tells me; but I aim to let on to him that the Red-Baptises and the Yaller-Baptises and the Presaterians is jes' as good as the Pistopals; and the Methdises is a heap better'n any of 'em (you and me is Methdises, ain't we gran'-daddy?) and I don't guess he'll think I'm a storyin'; do you gran'daddy?"

"Not if he's as knowin' as I take him to be, he won't."

Gran'daddy mounted the footlog and steadied himself by the hand rail as he crossed, while boy and dog scampered like squirrels ahead of him. On the other side he pretended to identify every print the boy discovered as track of deer, coon, bear, or catamount; there was nothing indefinite that might stand for a possible Santa Claus.

"He must have waded a right smart," there was a disappointed quiver in the shrill treble, "so's to throw us off the track; you reckon he kept to the branch as far up as the mill, gran'daddy?"

"It looks right much like he's just criss-crossed first one side the branch and then t'other; anyway he's got the sleight of coverin' up his tracks. I reckon we'll have to give it up, Grover Cleveland. Gran'daddy's powerful rushed for time to-day."

The old man recrossed the log, got into the wagon, and started on his jogging way, the boy a quiet, drooping little figure beside him.

"That's a mighty low-down trick in Old Sandy Claus to take and leave you out, Grover Cleveland. Them Pistopals is the no-countest critters to be found in these yer mountings."

"If I was the boss of all the meetin'-houses I wouldn't have any but jes' one, so's Old Sandy Claus 'ud have to do 'em all alike," the treble weakened and the boy gazed off into the woods with suspicious intensity.

"Now don't you go to takin'-on, Grover Cleveland; maybe you and me can git up a Christmas tree all to ourselves; how'd that do? I reckon ole gran'dad's about as rich right now as ary somebody round yer. I've just sold Copperhead Hill to the mining company and got the money down, two hundred and five dollars!" For a moment the old man gloated

in silence over his wealth, for among these North Carolina mountaineers commerce is mostly carried on by barter and cash in hand is a scarce commodity.

"The Pistopals' Chrisamus tree is only jes' a holly" — gradually as the new idea had possessed his mind the limp little head had faced front again — "I clum up into that thar fiddle-leaf poplar that grows front of the meetin'-house winder and looked in, and there ain't many berries on it at all; there's a heap prettier ones in our woods."

"Certainly there is, Grover Cleveland. There's a hundred in White-oak Gulley that's jes' the shape of a yaller-pine burr, and all shinin' with berries. You and me'll take Butterfly and Bonaparte up thar and we'll haul one of them ar holly bushes down to the house right soon, we will."

"Them Pistopals has got theirs

sot up in a box like it growed there." The blue eyes, though encircled with a tale-telling sedimentary deposit, were now lifted brightly to the kind old face and for gran'daddy there was no retreat.

"By gum, we'll set our tree up in a box in our t'other room like it growed there too."

"And le's don't jes' you and me have it all to ourselves, gran'daddy. Le's have something for Vance Long and Harve Edney too; his pa's a Red Baptis' and his ma's a Methdis', but I reckon Harve's the biggest part Methdis' cause he never does me mean. And I'd be proud to put a hymn-book on for Suly Jordan; she sings so good and she tied up my toe in turpentine that day I stubbed it. And there's Zeb'lon, old Aunt Dicey's gran'son — looks like he's growed bigger'n there's any call for — but he has troubles yet jes' like little fellers. Ole man Sumter, he shot

Zeb's tame deer last Friday, and Zeb and me, we got to it 'fore it was plumb dead and it looked up at Zeb, and Zeb he cried sure-'nough tears, he did. So you see Zeb's only a boy yet and I don't want to forgit him a-Chrisamus."

"Yaas, Grover Cleveland, we'll have a present on that ar tree for Zeb and Suly and for every Methdis' boy and girl in Junaluska. There can't be more'n a dozen of 'em since old man Simpson and his children and his gran'children and all his kinfolks left and jined the Baptises. And you can count their mas and their pas in too. But I'll have to depend on you a heap, Grover Cleveland, gran'daddy never did see a Christmas tree in all his life; it's a new institution in these mountings. Now if your gran'ma or your ma was alive they could help us out o' this scrape, but" —— he leaned over, trailed his whip-

lash in the sand and watched it reminiscently.

"And there's two or three old women I want to remember; there's old Aunt Dicey, she and your gran'-ma was always close friends. I believe I'll put a new frock on the Christmas tree for her. And 'way off up in Cutter's Cove there's Dan Cutter's widow; she and your gran'-ma was girls together, a pretty pair, too. I won't pass her by. And just 'cross the branch from her is where Sam Long's got his family stowed away. His mother — she's a queer ole stick as ever was — but they do say that Sam's wife does the old woman mean, so I'll give her a frock just to show 'em all that she's some thought of. If them old critters don't see a Christmas tree this year, the chances is they'll die 'thout ever seein' one. Haw, Bonaparte! By gum, if we'd a' been a steam car we'd have run plumb over old Mis' Jim-

son's cow; 'pears like she ain't got heart in her to get out of the way; I reckon that pore old somebody ain't got enough for herself to eat, let alone the cow. Gran'son, you jes' get over in behind thar and heave her out that thar corn that's under the bag of meal."

"Ain't she a Pistopal cow, gran'-daddy?"

"I 'low she is, gran'son, but she's got a whole rotation of stomachs and when they're all hungry at once it must give her a powerful gone feelin'. I'll put on a new frock for old Mis' Jimson. I don't reckon she ever had a store frock in her life and she ain't so old yet but what she can turn out of her loom a frock that'll outwear three of the store kind, but it'll be a change for her."

"O but, gran'daddy! gran'daddy! them Pistopals is right mean, they are, and ole Mis' Jimson's a Pistopal!"

"So she is, Grover Cleveland, so she is. I never thought of that" — for a minute they jogged along in silence — "I can't somehow 'count for that, gran'son; thar's a mistake somewhar — Mis' Jimson's a good woman. Anyway she can't git down to the Pistopal meetin'-house a-Christmas; she's got a risin' on her leg."

"Why, gran'daddy, old Mis' Jimson can't go anywhere! She couldn't even git into this yer wagon so as we-all could carry her!"

"I'm 'feared you're right, Grover Cleveland; now that's another difficulty —— "

"And all them other old women, gran'daddy — how're they going to git down to our Chrisamus tree, and how're they goin' to git back again?"

"That certainly is a puzzler, gran'son. I reckon we-all will have to sleep on to that. If your mother was

alive now, she'd know just how to take hold" —— the old man dropped his elbows upon his knees, doubling himself in sad retrospection, and the little boy slipped off the seat in an effort to imitate the position. On his knees, holding to the front of the wagon box, he solved the problem.

"Hi, gran'daddy!" he shouted, clutching the old man's trouserlegs to help himself to his feet, "me and you'll stand that ar Chrisamus tree up in the wagon and we'll hitch Bonaparte and Butterfly to it and we'll carry it round an' pick it as we go!"

"*That's* the talk, Grover Cleveland!" the old man brought down upon his knee a big emphatic hand covering there two little wincing ones; "your ma'd have thought of that, too."

"And I don't want to pass any boy's or girl's house without stoppin', gran'daddy, even if they's Pistopals;

I ain't mad at ary one of 'em but Williebelle Greenlee, and now I done forgot what I'm mad at her for."

"I don't aim to 'lowance you, Grover Cleveland. I aim to let you get a stick of peppermint or horehoun' for every boy and girl in Junaluska. I aim to let you show Old Sandy how the thing ought to be did. And I don't reckon I'll pass by any old woman, either, jes' 'cause she's been misled and jined the wrong church; it's bad enough to lose your way without bein' hounded for it besides."

"What makes Baptises and Methdises an' Presaterians an' all them, gran'daddy? Was they borned that way?"

"You an' me was, Grover Cleveland; our kinfolks was Methdises from way back before the flood I reckon; but the rest of 'em they're mostly jes' mixin's."

"When I come acrost the cattle

on the mountings, I can tell by the slits in their ears who owns 'em; but I can't tell what church owns the people round yer 'thout it's meetin'-Sunday and I can see what meetin'-house they're headin' for. Have they got any ear-marks that *you* know 'em by, gran'daddy?"

"No they ain't Grover Cleveland; they ain't none of 'em branded that-a-way."

"What makes 'em diff'rent, gran'-daddy?"

"It's the way they b'lieve, gran'-son. The Methdises they b'lieve in free grace and sprinklin', and the Baptises they b'lieve in sousin', and the Presaterians — they're right mean, they are — they b'lieve in 'lection."

"Mighty nigh every somebody round yer went to 'lection and voted that Tuesday, gran'daddy."

"So we did gran'son, so we did; but this yer Presaterian 'lection

is somehow diff'rent. It's a powerful low-down kind of 'lection — I reckon it's favourin' niggers votin'."

After waiting a few seconds for this theological seed to sink deep the old man went on.

"An' them Pistopals — I'm feared I'm a little in the dark as to their belief — but they must be mighty good scholars, for they kin read like lightnin'. They kin read a psa'm so fast that common folks can't take in the sense of what they're sayin'. And there's another good thing about 'em: they do rev'rence the name of the Lord in the Sunday sarvice; they bow considdable low when they come to it. Only it does look like they don't all of 'em carry their rev'rence 'round with 'em a-week-days; there's Cap'n Campbell, he can cuss considdable and he don't do no bowin' when he calls on the name of the Lord a-week-days."

"Hi, gran'daddy! the store-

keeper's wife she's a Pistopal — and Monday, when she was scoopin' up a pound of crackers for me, some mice run out of the cracker box and she jes' hollered out, 'For the Lord's sake!' and she didn't bow and she didn't look solemn, ary one."

"Gran'son, I've read that there third commandment a heap of times and I can't see as it provides for any week-day privileges or indulgences. When a man's cussin' mad, tain't so powerful ill for him to bat the old devil's name about some but, Grover Cleveland, don't you never go to triflin' with the name of the Lord; that's uncommon low down, that is.

"There used to formerly be only one kind of Baptises here and they warshipped in the old red church. But ole man Jordan he got his back up and he took all his kin-people away and he built another church and he painted it yaller. You see

he had a whole mountain of timber land that he was glad to get cleared off, and his sons run a sawmill, and there's a big bed of yaller ochre right back of his house. He was smart enough to set 'em all to work, while they was red-hot mad. If he'd a give 'em time to cool off, that ar yaller meetin'-house never would been built. They did cool off before they got the chimbly up and to this day they're a tryin' to praise the Lord with their stovepipe a-stickin' out the winder."

"There's too many kinds of 'em for old Sandy to git round to 'em all," said the small boy persistently, returning to his first sorrow.

"Sometimes it looks to me like there's too many kinds for the Lord to get round to 'em all, gran'son. There's some big cities where there's more kinds than we've got here. There's two or three kinds of Meth'-dises and there's Free-will Baptises

and Holinesses, and they all seem to be workin' for the same end, only they can't agree to work together. But, of course, people's got a right to all the religious differences they can pay for; but here in Junaluska we're too poor to have so many churches."

"How did there git to be so many kinds, gran'daddy?"

"'Twas zeal, Grover Cleveland. And there's another point where gran'daddy ain't exactly clear in his mind. Zeal must be a good thing; St. Paul he owned up that he had it, and yet — I reckon zeal's like 'lectric'ty, it's a powerful power for good so long as it's kept in leaders; but you let 'lectric'ty go rarin' round promiscuous and it'll rip things all to flinderations. Eight years ago we had jes' one church in Junaluska and we had a preacher all to ourselves; we didn't let him starve to death or freeze to death, ary one. He lived

down thar in my log cabin and he had his own roastin'-ear patch and a garden and a orchard. He had a horse of his own and there wasn't a cabin in any of these mountain gullies that he didn't know his way to, and there wasn't a cabin where he wasn't looked up to and respected. But by and by folks of diff'rent b'liefs came settlin' round here. They was all powerful pious and they was all bustin' with zeal, each one for his own 'religious denomination' as they called it. And — well — I never could contrive just how they done it — but tollable soon there was five diff'rent churches in Junaluska and no more religion than there was before; unless pullin' and haulin' and each one tryin' to git ahead of the other constitutes religion, which I'm doubtful if it do. And more'n that there ain't work enough nor ham and hominy enough in Junaluska for more than one preacher. Them

questions of yours has set me to studyin', Grover Cleveland.

So gran'daddy folded himself together and "studied" the rest of the way, while his grandson, making the most of his little brief authority, yelled so conflicting commands at the puzzled oxen that they took their head and in due time drew the rattling old wagon safe into the home barn yard.

A scarlet-beaded holly, fresh from the forests of the North Carolina mountains, is a Christmas Tree the wealthiest church in Christendom might covet. Such a one our heroes fixed upright and firm in the shackly old farm wagon. It seemed to grow from a soil deeply top dressed with corn fodder.

The resources of the one little store at the village were meagre but the genius of the decorators was not versatile. Gran'daddy chivalrously intended for the old women to have

the best and in his eyes a new frock was a princely gift. As for the old men, what so appropriate and acceptable as a paper of plug tobacco. At this stage his ingenuity was exhausted and his grandson did the rest.

If there was anything that Grover Cleveland liked better than candy, it was more candy, and though he was unlearned in the letter of the Golden Rule its spirit was inherent in his nature. So, although the storekeeper had laid in an extra supply for the holiday trade (it was all in sticks, the kind in vogue when grandmas were little girls), when our small Santa Claus had made his purchases there was none left in stock and by the time material for seventeen calico gowns had been measured off, the storekeeper, among whose mental endowments the commercial instinct was not prominent, had persuaded himself that it was a crying injustice that the well-filled shelves

of which he had been so proud should have been depleted at one purchase.

As much chagrined as pitiful, he watched his opportunity, and when Grover Cleveland, who was "toting" his packages from the store to the wagon where his grandfather sat, was gathering up his last armful he called him to a rear window.

"Do you see that ar woman toilin' up the mountain with a poke on her back?"

"Ye-e-s!" cried the child, "and she's got a little boy with her a heap littler than me!"

"That woman's yer Aunt Calliny; and that ar little boy's your own cousin. Don't you think one of them caliker frocks ought to go to her and some of that candy to little Jakey? Why, he's named for your gran'-daddy."

The loyal little grandson turned away dispiritedly saying only:

"She done gran'daddy mean."

"And that ar little feller's shoes is

the raggedest you ever see," this last remark was flung after the boy who was making a rapid exit.

The Ledbetter homestead was some distance from the highroad behind a screen of hills, and an old shed into which the afternoon sun shone with warm approval afforded privacy for the trimming of the tree. Though one pair of hands trembled with age and one pair with eagerness, as early as the twenty-second of December it stood in glorious completeness. The calico frocks, tightly rolled and tied with twine, swung from the stoutest branches, while the twigs bore fruit of plug tobacco and candy in wasteful and bewildering abundance.

"Twenty-three, twenty-four, twenty-five," counted the tired little Santa Claus as he lay on his bed that night. Three æons the days seemed to him and he sighed himself off to the land of Nod. The old man too slipped smoothly off

to sleep, but he sighed as he went to think that time flies so fast. Dixie took no note of time, but before morning he took note of a bear that came nosing about the premises, attracted by the smell of sweets, and he barked so frantically as to bring the old man upon the spot armed with a musket that had seen service in '61. Bruin retired from the scene with a leaden Christmas gift under his hide and gran'daddy wrapped himself in a tattered cloak of army gray and patrolled till morning. He felt hardly equal to two more nights of keeping guard, so he said to his grandson over their early breakfast:

"This is a mighty pretty day and it might rain a-Christmas."

So they made out their itinerary at once and, though they were subject to some delays and gran'daddy remarked as he groped for his gloves in the wood box among dish towels,

frying pans, broken dishes, and wearing apparel, "It's quare what a way things has of skulking out of sight when they're wanted," and the little boy replied as he tore a strip from a window curtain and gartered his stocking, "It's 'cause we ain't got no woman here to keep 'em in their place," by sunrise the oxen were hitched up and the premature Christmas tree started on its journey.

It was a day of gentle, insinuative, persistent sunshine, such as in these mountains December is not chary of. The frost-sheathed trees of the highest ridges lay like a long fluff of white ostrich feathers against the azure; light snows and partial thaws had converted the nearer mountain sides into a darkly crayoned network of lines and angles upon a dappled ground; all around them clustered the innumerable beauties of the winter landscape, and only the roads were vile.

The old man looked a veritable Santa Claus. Recognizing the churchly significance of the occasion, he had unbraided his beard and it fell before him a rippling, silver shield; beneath his gray slouch hat his kind eyes twinkled in their coverts of shaggy beetle-brows and, unconsciously completing the picture, he had discarded his tobacco for a corn-cob pipe.

Beside him, his little heart a-flutter but his face held resolutely serious, sat his grandson and between them sat Dixie for, in recognition of his services of the night, he too had been advanced to the position of a Santa Claus and in a far corner of the wagon, where the benefactor would not be tempted to test for himself the comparative blessedness of giving and receiving, was a stack of bones (there had been a "killing" the day before) for Dixie to bestow upon his canine acquaintances.

To old Mis' Jimson the tree was carried in pristine completeness. From the well where she was trying to persuade her cow that a handful of meal in two gallons of water is mush, she espied its green top coming up behind the hill. For a moment she watched it grow, but before the oxen came into sight she hobbled away in terror to her cabin.

"I knowed it," she said. "I knowed that ar owl a-hootin' 'fore the door all night, meant some kind of meanness. 'Trees as men walkin'" — she paraphrased unwittingly, and she didn't know whether the text was history or prophecy. But she grabbed her testament from off the shelf and a rabbit's foot from out the button box, reassuring herself by a swift glance that it was the left hind one (no other "keeps a man from harm"), pressed the two together, and ventured to take another look. She

recognized the oxen, the wagon, and its occupants. Her terror fled, but she stood transfixed with amazement.

"Mis' Jimson, this 'ere's a sure 'nough Chrisamas tree," called Grover Cleveland.

She hobbled down to the gate. "What upon airth, Jakey Ledbetter?" she asked.

Her old neighbour's answer was an impressive silence while his unsteady hands plucked from the tree a roll of blue calico. "We reckoned, Grover Cleveland and me did, that this yer sprigged pattern would be becomin' to your build," he said presenting it.

"You ain't tellin' me that this yer's for me!" — she smoothed out a fold with a quivering motion of her rheumatic old hand — "Colonel Ledbetter, I never *did* have a store frock before and it's more'n I ever expected to own in this world."

"Moo-o," complained the cow and overturned the bucket, whereupon an avalanche of "roughness" descended upon her head.

"La me," exclaimed Mis' Jimson, "is Christmas trees for the dumb critters too?"

"That's the view Grover Cleveland 'pears to take of it. Thar's enough for one fodderin' gran'son; we'll drive round and put the rest in the shed."

Shielding her eyes with her hand the old woman watched them out of sight. "I ain't been carin' lately whether I was livin' or not," she mused, "but if Christmas trees is beginnin' to circolate in these yer mountings, I aim to perk up and live long enough to git my share."

Most of the old people who were young when gran'daddy was a boy still occupied their fathers' holdings in clefts and coves up in the higher

mountains and to them the tree was carried while the sunshine still slanted and the roads were unthawed. Time flies or I would tell of its triumphant journey; how faded eyes grew bright and wrinkles wreathed themselves into smiles; how salutations and jokes fresh fifty years ago tripped upon the tongue as nimbly as in their early days. Only one failed to respond to the Christmas spirit of the occasion. That was old Captain Sumter. They came upon him leaning over his remnant of front fence viciously fletcherizing tobacco of his own unskillful curing.

"What fool consarn's that, Jake Ledbetter?" he growled as the turnout stopped before him.

"It's a Chrisamus tree," called Grover Cleveland, scrambling to the ground and presenting him with a package of choice Durham.

The old man pocketed it but his

thanks were of a fashion peculiarly his own:

"Jake Ledbetter, you always was the durndest fool in Junaluska."

Only one took exception to her gift. That was Aunt Sally Long, the "queer old stick."

"Now Jakey Ledbetter," she whined, "I can't put that caliker to no use in the world. I wove this frock myself mighty nigh five year ago"—she held out her narrow skirt for his inspection—"and I ain't snagged it yet. I reckon it's goin' to last as long's I do, at any rate I don't want another frock added unto me. I'd a heap ruther you'd a brung me a pound of snuff."

"Aunt Sally" (the accommodating Santa Claus took the roll from her and restored it to the tree), "it's my intention for you to have whatever you can get the most fun out of; I can barter that thar frock for snuff enough to last you all your life, and

there'll be a balance comin' to you besides; what'll you have for that?"

"I don' know, Jakey," she drawled, and she pleated the hem of her apron while she pondered, "I don' know; I reckon you might as well bring me a little more snuff."

The roads were heavy with mud when Bonaparte and Butterfly toiled down into the little straggling town. "This is a Chrisamus tree," announced the little Santa Claus, and there was no need to tarry there for delivery, for all the foot-free denizens, young, old, and middle-aged, thronged it when it stopped and followed when it moved on, and the tree shed its fruit as if a gale had struck it.

The old Santa Claus held his whip with a fine show of nonchalance while the little one worked among the holly branches, disdainful of the thorns, his eyes afire, his cheeks red hot, and his aureole of

yellow hair tossing and tumbling with every motion of his little body. Williebelle, her ears tied up with a red woollen stocking and redolent of turpentine, was there and upon her he bestowed three sticks of peppermint, "two for herself and one for her earache." He waited in person upon Aunt Polly, bedridden for a dozen years, and the procession was brought to a stand before her door that she might look out upon the first Christmas tree she had ever seen.

"I 'low this is a Methdis' Christmas tree," cried an Episcopalian (the only cynical one), "you-all aimed to get ahead of us."

"No, siree," answered the old man, "this yer tree's built according to Grover Cleveland's plan and he don't b'lieve in secks. We-all ain't aimin' to git ahead of anybody but the bears."

"Merry Christmas," shouted a

peace-making Episcopalian and the crowd took up the greeting, "Merry Christmas! Merry Christmas!" till the hills gave back the echo.

The tired oxen drew the dismantled tree out of the village. The tired little Santa Claus cuddled sleepily within the encircling arm of the old one but they left behind them the spirit of the Christmas-tide. In the village "Merry Christmas!" still sounded from house to house and along the streets. The sticky children shouted it to one another; the women from their door-ways told it to passers-by; old men, nodding and smiling as they fumbled with jack-knife and tobacco and young men lounging on the corners, all told it to one another. Red Baptists told it to Yellow Baptists and Presbyterians to Methodists, and some unthinkingly told it to persons they were not on speaking terms with, then

looked ashamed but repeated it. By and by the shadows came down into the valley, crept to the summits of the eastern ridge, slipped over and the village lay in darkness and in peace.

But high up on the mountain side, in a lonely hut that had not been visited by the Christmas tree, Carolina cuddled her little boy to sleep, crooning softly and sadly:

"While shepherds watched their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground."

II

CREEDS AND DEEDS

The Episcopalians met next morning to trim the tree. They had the candles and candies and tinsel decorations sent them by the foreign Santa Claus whom Grover Cleveland had tried to track, and for every member of their congregation they had made little stockings of net. These they proceeded to fill with candy and to hang upon the tree, discussing meanwhile the perambulating tree of the previous day.

"There was nary somebody passed by," said one, restoring with a bit

of lemon stick the equilibrium of a tilted stocking, "the babies got something, every last one of 'em, and the niggers too, so fur as I know."

"Every one was free to go to the first Christmas celebration," said the young girl who taught the two-months-a-year free-school. "The shepherds came from the fields, and the angels came from heaven, and I have read that the wise men who came were from so far removed parts of the earth that they didn't even speak the same language."

"You reckon they was all Episcopals?"

"No, but when they went away they were all Christians."

The rest of the decorators were a little awed by such erudition and no further remarks were made till the last gift was tied in its place and the candles, firmly fixed and pointing rafterward, were ready

for the lighting. Then they stood off and surveyed the work of their hands.

"It's powerful pretty," said one.

"Yes, but seem like it's narrow-contracted 'long side of Grover Cleveland's tree. 'Course we've got six ten-cent dolls and he didn't have nary one and he didn't have nary candle but ——"

"It's not leavin' out ary somebody that I'm studyin' about. Why even our Nick got a shinbone, and I declare if he ain't fit Grover Cleveland's dog till he's mighty nigh chawed his ears plumb off his head."

"Old man Higgins told me 'Merry Christmas' yesterday evening. It's the first word he's spoke to me since I left the Methdis' meetin'-house, and I wish there was something on this yer tree for him, just to show him that we-all ain't holdin' a grudge," and further discussion revealed the fact that every

one there had a neighbour or friend belonging to one of the other churches whom, for one reason or another, he or she would like to invite to the Christmas-tree.

The school teacher took a pencil from her pocket and they gathered round her. "We'll begin at the first house towards sun-up," they said; "there's three somebodies there, there's two in the next house and ——" they counted every person in the neighbourhood and then the school teacher "done a sum." "Nine pounds more will treat them all to candy," she said and in a body they proceeded to the store to see if they could buy nine pounds at the wholesale rate.

"I declare, 'tain't my fault," pleaded the storekeeper. "I laid in ten pounds extra for Christmas but old man Ledbetter come in yer and he let Grover Cleveland clean me out. You can gen'rally, most al-

ways trust Colonel Ledbetter not to do no low down tricks but you-all know how'tis; if Grover Cleveland was a-hankerin' after the whole top side of the airth his gran'daddy'd git it for him if he could. I've ordered some more, but it won't be here till to-morrow."

"That's all right," said the school teacher, "we'll meet again this evening to make some more stockings, and we'll trim the tree all over again and we'll have a Christmas tree for all Junaluska."

Some rustic beaux had been hanging about the group listening to the colloquy. They looked at one another and they looked at a row of fresh-faced, luxuriant-haired mountain girls at another counter bartering eggs which they had "toted" from their homes five or six miles away.

"Make it a general spree this evening," they pleaded, "let us

come to the tree-trimming and bring our girls."

"We will," said the teacher, "if you-all will spread the news that it's to be an un-de-nom-i-na-tional tree and that all the grown-ups are invited to come to-night to the trimming and to bring for the tree whatever gifts they have for their families and their friends, and that young and old are invited to the exercises to-morrow night."

"Captain Boyce won't come nor Judge Brevard, ary one; they took a oath never to set foot in that thar meetin'-house."

"Then we'll move the tree somewhere else."

Such was the series of events that transferred the tree and the trimmers to Colonel Ledbetter's two-room cabin that overlooked the village from a highroad. The log fire blazing wide and high in the chimney place put to shame the candles that



"They drew up some benches before the fire and gave themselves to rest and reminiscence"

swaled and sputtered in turnip candelabra, but could not dim the light that shone from merry eyes as the happy people helped or hindered with equally good intentions. Long before dispersion could be thought of the tree stood full fruited and ready for the morrow's harvesting.

Suddenly the barking of a dog roused the gully behind the cabin.

"That's my Cæsar; he's struck a 'possum trail," exclaimed a swain and with one rush young men and maidens made for the moonlit out-of-doors and joined in a 'possum hunt. Only the serious minded remained, fewer than a score of people and yet they were the metaphorical pillars of five different denominations of Christian churches, each struggling independently to establish the same gospel in that little mountain town. They drew up some benches before the fire and gave themselves to rest and reminiscence. On the

road, in the fields, or at his fireside the Junaluskan may address his neighbour as Bill or Jeff or Jack, but in assembly every elderly man is accorded a title, military, civil, or ecclesiastic.

"Gettin' 'long in years, Colonel Ledbetter," observed a grizzled mountaineer running his eyes along the blackened rafters of the cabin; "a hundred year old ain't it?"

"Mighty nigh," answered the Colonel shooting tobacco juice at a fallen ember before kicking it back into the fire.

"Looks like with a little fixin' up 'twas good for another hundred. You ain't let it lately?"

"No, Deacon Higgins, I ain't." The speaker doubled into his studying attitude with unperceiving eyes upon the hearth; "the last tenant made a barnyard of the road out yer in front, fed his cattle and hogs there reg'lar so't women folks

couldn't git by to go to meetin' without silin' their Sunday clothes and he let the ragweed run clean up to the eaves. It hurt my feelin's to look at the place, 'twas such a contrast to what' twas when Preacher Carr had it, so I turned him loose and locked the door and I don't guess I'll ever rent it again."

"Preacher Carr certainly did keep it mighty snug," said Captain Campbell, "and he was powerful proud of it too. He'd point out to every stranger the part the Injins built and the part your father added on to it; and he was proud of all outdoors besides. He 'lowed there wasn't another tree in the country so handsome to look at as this yer postoak out in front."

"And if he and his old gray mare was on the homeward road any whar near sundown, she'd break into a trot of her own free will and accord, knowin' she'd got to git him here in

time to see the sun slip down behind the Bald."

"And he done made a sermon onct 'bout that ar cliff t'other side the road. His tex' was somethin' 'bout 'The shadow of a Great Rock,' and mighty nigh all the women in the meetin'-house had to unfold their pocket handkerchiefs 'fore he got through."

"And he done kep' his tater-patch as clean of weeds as my wife keeps her posy beds."

"And he worked jes' as hard to weed the sin out of Junaluska as he did to weed the pusly and cockles out of his roas'n'-ear patch."

"Amen!" shouted Deacon Higgins."

"And he was always yer when he was needed" — the voice was unsteady and the speaker sat in the shadow. "I tell ye it cuts me powerful that when my wife died last spring there was nary a preacher

to take her last test'mony, and she a-askin' for him all the time. The neighbours done what they could when we laid her away; they sung a hymn and Judge Brevard read a chapter, but there was nary a sermon preached or a lesson of her life said over her, and she a Meth'dis' in good and reg'lar standin'. I ain't a-blamin' our young preacher; the branches was swelled at the fords and the bridges was swept away. He couldn't git yer nohow. But seem like something's wrong when we've got five meetin'-houses and nary preacher living yer."

"We don't have Pres'terian preachin' but once a month, because our preacher's got three other charges besides Junaluska. He rides seventeen miles to git yer; but he ain't Samson and he's mighty nigh wore out 'fore he begins, and he has to gallop through the sarvice and ride off to after-dark preachin' somewheres else."

"Jes' the same way 'tis with our preacher" — the women were speaking now — "he shakes hands friendly like but I don't guess, if all the folks in the diff'rent places where he preaches was stood up together, he'd know me and my children from the lot."

"Them was good old times" — the deacon's wife took off her sunbonnet and straightened up its crown as she spoke — "when we had one meetin'-house and preachin' every Sunday and Preacher Carr was right here on the ground ready for marryin' or buryin' or any sich like."

"And Mis' Carr — she was a mother to all of us."

"*Our* preacher's got a right big family and they do say that he don't make enough to keep 'em all comf'table; but I don't know how 'tis. Our church agreed to give him thirty dollars this year and we done

raised fo'teen of it cash down and we reckoned we'd about make up the balance of it in apples and potatoes; there was some corn give besides. To be sure there was no way for him to haul it home, for he don't own a wagon; but seem like, if his other churches done as well by him as we do, he wouldn't be so peaked looking. They say he ain't nary top coat to wear, but we-all give him nine pair of mittens and five pair of wristers, and Callerstown give him seven pair of mittens and four comforters for his neck and some wristers besides, and it do seem like his other churches ought to give him a overcoat."

A few minutes of thoughtful silence ensued; then a philosopher spoke.

"It's a heap easier to 'stablish churches than 'tis to support 'em after they're sot goin'."

With a deeply drawn breath Col-

onel Ledbetter stretched out his legs, set his soles upright before the fire, folded his arms and squared himself. He waited respectfully for the old bench to complete its squeaking preface, then, singling out one fork of a blazing log, addressed it earnestly.

"Grover Cleveland, he don't believe in beliefs and I've been a-studyin' whether he ain't right. I reason this a-way:

"You-all know how 'tis with the gris'-mills round yer; some of 'em is run by a turbine wheel and some by a overshot wheel and Captain Campbell he's jes' sot up a undershot wheel. But if the day of meracles wasn't past and some of us should stop on our way home from the mill and leave ole Mis' Jimson a bag of meal, it would keep her and her ole cow from starvin' plumb to death and she'd never ask which mill ground that ar grist. And in my

opinion that's the way 'tis with these yer diff'rent religious secks we've got in Junaluska; they each turn their crank in their own way but there ain't much choice in the grist they turn out; that is to say, neighbours, if you judge a man from his outgoin's and his incomin's it would take more than human jedgment to tell whether he's been ground by the Piscopals or the Methdises or the Presaterians or the Baptises.

"When we git riled, Presaterian cussin' don't sound noways diff'rent from Methdis' cussin' and a wayfarin' man in Junaluska could never tell by lookin' at the children's frocks and faces whether their mothers believe that sprinklin' or duckin' is the tellin'est means of grace; and Baptis' hogs and cattle left out on the mountings all winter without fodder and shelter looks jes' as gaunted-up when spring comes as the Piscopals' does. I'm

beginnin' to think, neighbours, that there's right much more religion in *doin'* then there is in fussin' about beliefs."

"Amen!" shouted a Methodist brother and the speaker gained courage.

"I'd like," he went on, "to jine hands and pull together again, and don't meddle with each others' beliefs, till some one's deeds shows that his creed is the best. I'd like not to worship any longer in meetin'-houses that ain't as snug as a barn ought to be. All of us together can keep one building painted and the roof tight and the windows sashed. I'd like not to have a hand in starvin' or freezin' any more preachers, but to make one preacher comf'table right here in Junaluska — we done it once and we done it without any outside help too — and we can do it ag'in. I'd like to have him always right yer on

the ground to christen our children, to bury our dead, and to marry our young folks. For myself, I ain't carin' what college turned him out so's he's a sure-'nough Christian and cares more about right livin' than he does about beliefs."

By the wall, the only occupant of a bench with legs of assorted lengths and easily tilted, sat Deacon Higgins who here put in a demurrer. Jolting back and forth, bringing the bench legs and his feet resoundingly upon the floor to mark his time. he sang, his eyes fixed upon a rafter and his heart upon opposition:

"'I'm Meth'dis born an Pres'terian bred,
But Meth'dis will I die!'

I'm a shoutin' Meth'dis."

"Well, you could continue on a shouting Meth'dis!"

"La, yes;" Colonel Ledbetter's plan had won some enthusiastic supporters among the women. "Deacon Higgins you could take an

amen corner for you and your folks and we-all wouldn't object to your shoutin' in once in a while."

"And if the Piscopals wants to stand up and stretch their legs and try a readin' match with the preacher now and then, why we could accommodate 'em with some Bible-readin' 'long with the singin' and preachin'; the Bible makes good readin' for any 'casion."

"I'm tired," said a weary-eyed woman. "I'm tired of the everlastin' scratchin' round to git ahead of some one else; I'm tired of runnin' our church with one eye onto four other churches to see that they don't come out a step ahead."

Here a horse's hoofs clattered upon the frozen road in front. Two or three women went to the window. "It's Preacher Freeman," they announced. "He's on his way to Mills's Ford to see that man that's been hurt."

"He's got nine miles further to ride and it's mighty cold."

The door opened and a tall man, dark and spare, entered. He might have been thirty years old, but he smiled at the tree with boyish appreciation as he made his way past it and gave the assembly a general "Howdy." Then he drew off his mittens and went from one to another shaking hands though he didn't call them all by name. His own church people were there, but it is needless to name their denominational conformity — he was an honour to any church. They gave him a seat before the fire and he stretched out his shabbily shod feet toward it with a tired sigh, but an involuntary one, for he checked it.

"I stopped at your house Judge Brevard," he said, "and learned that you were here."

Embarrassed at being found in company so ecclesiastically mixed,

Brevard irrelevantly felt of the young man's coat.

"Tollable thin for this weather," he said.

"The exercise of riding keeps me warm," answered the preacher and changed the subject. "I didn't expect to find all my people here" (with kind eyes he seemed to single out his own). "I'm *glad* of it," he continued heartily. "I'm *glad* to see the whole neighbourhood joining hands."

He praised the tree, gave a few minutes to general and friendly discourse, arranged with Brevard the personal matter which had been the object of his call, wished them a "Merry Christmas" and went out. They heard him speak to his horse as he untied him but in a moment he entered the cabin again. He came forward haltingly and laid a hand upon the back of a bench, fidgeting like an embarrassed schoolboy as he began to speak:

"Brethren, I spent last night twenty miles from here up on the Harriman Mountain. You-all know what Harriman is like."

Colonel Ledbetter twisted himself round and faced the speaker.

"It's the barrenest, ungratefulest land in the North Callina Mountains" (his voice had a defiant twang as if he challenged contradiction), "and how old Preacher Carr wrastles a livin' out of that place he's settled on, is more'n I can study out."

"It's Preacher Carr I want to speak to you about. You-all know that Brother Carr can get a crop out of a piece of ground if any one can. Next to men's souls he loves the soil, and, my friends, whether we work with things physical or spiritual, it's the loving touch that coaxes on the harvest. You-all know that, with late spring frosts and summer droughts, this has been a hard year for our farmers — your

own cribs are only half full of corn and your fodder stacks are few and small; and yet your valley is a Land of Promise compared to Harriman's Bald. Preacher Carr and his wife are facing a winter of want. They gave me the mountaineer's welcome, but when she prepared the supper, I heard her gourd-scoop scrape the bottom of the meal bin, and this morning a creditor led away their staggering, starving cow. And yet Brother Carr is not decrepit; he is still hale and hearty but — God pity the old when their work is taken out of their hands before their graves are ready for them.

"He asked after his people in Junaluska (you will be '*his* people' as long as his loyal old soul harbours a sentiment) and, when I told him I should pass through here this evening, he said, 'Tell them a God-bless you, for me.' Some one has

told him that his old church is well-nigh gone to ruin and he asked me to take notice of it as I passed by and to shut the door if it stood open.

"So I have come back to ask you to add to your Christmas list the name of your old neighbour, friend, and pastor, this needy servant of God. He has not forgotten you and I know you will not forget him."

He turned and walked out of the cabin and the group sat in silence till the sound of his horse's hoofs grew faint.

"Them was good old times," reiterated the deacon's wife.

"I was some to blame when Preacher Carr was sent away," said Colonel Ledbetter, "I own up to it but ——"

"You hadn't a mite more to say about it than the rest of us had ——"

"I hadn't a thing in the world

agin him," the old man went on without noticing the interruption; " 'twas only that two other churches was a-runnin' opposition to us and their preachers were young men and were drawing off our young people; I thought if we had a young man to preach for us we might get 'em all back again. 'Twas zeal that made me do it, misguided zeal; you see I hadn't studied it out about religious secks then as I have since."

But we need not give a full report of that meeting. It was not conducted by parliamentary rules, but its enactments went into effect next day.

Grover Cleveland and gran'daddy, side by side in the old farm wagon, took the road while it was still so dark that they must needs give the mules the rein. But there were other early risers in that community, for by sunrise Campbell and Greenlee and Brevard and others were

playing away with hammer and trowel upon the Ledbetter cabin. They repaired the roof, they cemented into place the loose stones of the fireplace, and topped out the fallen chimney; between the logs they spatted clay — taken from the road in front but good as imperial Cæsar's — and stopped the cracks "to keep the wind away." They propped the leaning cow shed and before noon an occupant, "mighty nigh all Jersey," was chewing her cud, while over her head was stored fodder sufficient to keep her chewing till pastures were green. Her neighbour on the other side of a partition was a Kentucky-bred roan mare, which but a few hours ago had been the property of Captain Campbell; he had appeared upon the scene riding a gray and leading the roan all saddled and ready for the road and had made her comfortable in this new home.

In durance a heterogeneous collection of chickens were making one another's acquaintance over a collation of corn, the only unsociable one among them being Aunt Dicey's old black hen; her powers were all employed in an effort to rid herself of a streamer of red flannel which the old lady had tied to her tail to discourage her sitting propensities.

Within doors the Christmas tree with its unshed mask still monopolized one room, but in the other cheerful hands worked a metamorphosis. Cobwebs, litter, and soil disappeared, and furniture, country made but adapted to its purpose, took its place. Upon the tough and rough old chestnut floor they levelled a bed of hay and, so that it was soft as pillows to the tread, what matter that each breadth of the rag carpet they spread upon it showed different tones of home-made dyes and the weave of a dif-

ferent loom? In one corner they corded together a bedstead in the good old fashion of their great-grandparents, and the bed they reared upon it was a marvel. There was a mattress of oat straw and one of corn-husks, a bed of stripped hens' feathers and one of geese feathers, and bolsters and pillows in numbers sufficient to accommodate a family of hydras. Aunt Dicey furnished blankets spun and woven by her own hands from wool of her own shearing, and among a collection of quilts was a wonderful one of old Mis' Jimson's piecing. It contained, by actual count, three thousand one hundred and seventy-nine pieces and she called it "The Foundation of the Great Deep." When at last that bed was made up, the turkey red cherubs on the pillow-shams (almost the only shams that modernity had introduced among those artless people) lay very close to the

rafters. Its makers viewed it with admiration and complacency, but Deacon Higgins looked dubious:

"They're a tollable spry old couple," he said, "but" — and he wheeled a barrel of potatoes alongside as a suggestion of means of getting into bed.

It would take a readier pen than mine to enumerate and describe all the gifts that were brought to that plenishing. The cupboard door refused to close upon the array of ham, hominy, and honey (the three h's of the mountaineer), the salt-rising bread, and the soda biscuit.

Major Greenlee was a carpenter. For half a day he planed, sawed, and hammered in a corner and when his work took form it was a capacious meal bin. When bagfuls of corn meal had been emptied into it till it was "plumb full" they all surveyed it with satisfaction and "reck-

oned the gourd wouldn't scrape the bottom of that before spring."

All day long pedestrians and vehicles had been coming and going before the old house as never before in its history and yet when the sun had set the sky on fire behind the Bald, the gathered people were still awaiting an arrival.

They scanned a mountain road above them, visible only in short lengths where it emerged from the forests into the clearings.

"I see 'em!" a far-sighted old man shouted with a boy's enthusiasm, "I see Colonel Ledbetter's white mules! Now they're behind May's Peak, you'll see 'em come out on t'other side."

And so they watched them from point to point and every time they came into view a squad ran in to re-inspect the cabin and see that every thing was in order.

At last the white mules stood

before the door. Colonel Ledbetter and Grover Cleveland sat on the front seat of the wagon, and on chairs behind them sat Preacher Carr and his wife.

Strong hands assisted the wife to alight, but the preacher sprang over the wheel to greet his people. They crowded round him and the young cried, "Merry Christmas," and the old said, "Welcome Home."

They seated the pair beside their old beloved fireside. They were eight years older than when they had left it. The preacher had "held his own," but when they took off the good wife's bonnet her hair showed very white. A tender hand smoothed it.

"We are growing old," said the preacher, but they told him that the gospel that he preached and lived would never grow old. They told him too of repairs to be made in the old church; it would look

just as it used to look but over the door there would be the inscription:

THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind and thy neighbour as thyself.

The tree was stripped; the white mules were headed homeward; old man Ledbetter gathered up his reins and a tired little lad nestled close to his side.

"Wake up, Grover Cleveland, wake up! Don't you hear 'em singing! Jine in, Grover Cleveland, jine in!"

Within the cabin a chorus swelled; without, one thin little voice piped free and clear:

"Crown Him, crown Him, crown Him,
Lord of all."

III

UNCONSCIOUS MENTALITY

What their acquaintances called an "understanding," existed betwen Arsula Jordan and Thaddeus Garrett and he had taken her with him up on the mountain to consult Dan Cutter about hauling the timber for a new house. Their horse, Beauregard, having taken the road leisurely, eleven o'clock found them winding along the downhill road but still two miles from their homes in the village.

On their right the Junaluska swirled between its wooded banks. The moon was on their right too,

throwing shadows across their road, dense or skeleton, as evergreen or deciduous trees obstructed its radiance.

"I think I see things a-skulkin' 'cross the road," said Arsula, crowding Thad more closely; "do you reckon any wild-cats could have come down off the Bald?"

"It's only the shadders a-shiftin' theirselves when the wind bends the trees; I didn't reckon you was that scary, Suly; why there's nothin' to be scairt of; *I'm* here Suly! And *I* ain't scairt of anything that travels these yer mountings — leastwise not of anything in flesh and blood."

"Well I ain't scart of anything that *isn't* flesh and blood."

"*You say you ain't?*"

"La, no; I don't b'lieve in ha'nts."

"*You say you don't?*"

"No I don't; I b'lieve that when a body's once plumb dead and

buried in the ground, he ain't goin' to show hisself on the top side of the earth again till judgment day.

"Oh lawdy!" the ejaculation was only aspirated, and Thad brought Beauregard to a stand without speaking to him. They were at a bend of the road where it crossed the river. Above the ford, dark hemlocks arched the stream and the foot log lay in their dense shadow. Upon it something moved like a pale gray cloud, not outlined against the blackness, but softly blending with it.

Beauregard saw it too and pricked up his ears. Thad wound the reins round his right hand and even brought his left into action though with a soft apology to Suly:

"Looks like I might want all the hands I've got to hold him. You take a tight holt of me," he counselled under his breath and, as the spectre neared the farther side, proceeded chidingly: "It's powerful

triflin', Suly, to go to talkin' 'bout ha'nts when you're out in the woods at night — it's tollable sure to call 'em up" — a rustling among the dry leaves under the bushes changed the course of his remarks.

"If the durn thing 'ud move a little faster, I'd drive into the water and stand a spell; witches and ha'nts and all them things is shy of water." There was a closer scurry among the leaves and at a twitch of the reins Beauregard drew them into the ford and stopped there in obedience to another silent signal.

Above the rustling they heard a panting breath, and another ghost, a nimbler one, was on the log, a light, flying shadow against the dark, stationary ones.

"Sho," said Suly, "it's only a dog." She started to whistle but Thad clapped his hand over her mouth:

"For gracious sake, Suly, don't do that — it's awful darin'."

She was gurgling and spurting in an effort to regain her right of free speech when together the apparitions seemed to slip off the log upon the other side.

"I tell you it's Colonel Ledbetter's Dixie," she cried as a dog frisked out into the moonlight; "and sure's you're born that's little Grover Cleveland! and he's walkin' in his sleep again — poor little soul! Git up Beau!" She clutched at the reins, but Thad caught her hand.

"Poor little soul!" she repeated. "His gran'daddy'd go plumb distracted if he knowed that little soul was out on the mountings this time o' night; nothin' on him either, I reckon, but just his little shirt! Thad, if you don't drive on right now, I'll jump into the crick, I vow I will! I want to get my hands on him — poor little soul!"

When Beauregard trailed out upon the other side Suly leaped to the ground. "I want to see how he looks when he's took this-a-way."

The boy was several rods ahead trudging abstractedly along, his little, faded, blue-checked shirt playing about his knees, his bare feet taking the road unhesitatingly, his half-closed eyes looking neither right nor left nor seemingly before him. Curious, pitiful, Arsula walked beside him for a few steps in silence. He didn't hear her nor the creak of the wagon behind her. His physical senses were in suspension. He was intently acting out some dream that dominated his little brain.

Head and tail adroop, Dixie was following so closely that now and again his muzzle touched the little loosely hanging hand. He seemed to take no more notice of Arsula as she came abreast than did his child

master; but *he* was not walking in his sleep, for, though his dejected head never swerved, his eyes turned sidewise in their sockets and his lips wrinkled in very unbecoming folds above his teeth.

"Grover Cleveland," Suly spoke softly, for, despite her brave common sense, she felt awed in this presence of a ruling, supernatural mentality; besides she wanted to spare the little favourite the shock of a too sudden awakening. But the boy walked on.

"Grover Cleveland, oh, Grover Cleveland!" she said more emphatically and gently put out her hand to take him by the shoulder.

"Gr-r-r-r-r-r!" said Dixie.

"Now look here Dixie Ledbetter," she scolded severely, "you needn't go to putting on any such airs as that when I'm around. I wouldn't do Grover Cleveland mean a mite sooner'n you would, and you know

it. And more than that, if I'd been in your place I'd have found some way to wake him up before he'd tramped this far in the cold. And more than that, t'other side the ford you went tearin' off after a rabbit or a 'possum or a coon, and left him to find his way all by hisself. Now you get over there and don't you say no more to *me!*"

Ashamed of his shortcomings or awed by her gestures, which were imperious, Dixie slunk to the other side of his master who, partially recovered by the unusual tones, came to a stand dazed and trembling.

"Poor little soul!" she said dropping to her knees and putting her arms about him. "Wake up, dear, and don't you be scairt a mite, for it's only Suly; you know Suly, don't you?" her voice broke and a tear or two ran over her cheeks.

The child, coming slowly back to

consciousness, gazed blankly into her face, then turned and peered into the woods, drawing his breath in hard, dry sobs. Then he recognized Dixie and felt of his tattered ears with a weakly caressing motion.

"Yes, Dixie's here," coaxed Suly, "and I'm here and Thad's here with the wagon and we're goin' to carry you right home to your gran'daddy."

By now Thaddeus was beside them. "Well, what about it!" was all he could say, but he acted promptly upon Suly's bidding and lifted the boy into the wagon.

Suly wrapped him in a time-worn blanket of confederate gray that had been doing duty as a cushion and set him between them.

"Now where was you a-goin' to?" interrogated the amazed Thaddeus, taking up the reins and driving slowly on.

"I — don't — know," sobbed the child.

"Why he was going home," kindly assisted Suly.

"Where have you been at?" persisted Thaddeus.

"I — don't — know."

"Well how'd you *git* here, anyway?"

"Now Thad, you quit pesterin' him," commanded Suly.

By now the boy was quite himself and making desperate efforts to breathe without sobbing. "It's powerful mizzable to be borned with ways that you can't help," he faltered, and the girl essayed to change the current of his thoughts.

"You knowed your Aunt Carliny and little Jakey had come back here to live, didn't you, Grover Cleveland?"

"She done gran'daddy mean," answered the boy and added after a long, tremulous breath, "Jakey's shoes is wore out."

They drove on in silence. When

the boy had become quiet and too sleepy, Arsula believed, to take notice of what she was saying, she ventured to relieve her mind of some of its distracting emotions.

"If Carliny was where she'd ought to be, a-keepin' house for her father, this little soul'd never get out of the house at night without her knowin' it — I'm plumb sure of that. To think of her livin' away off up there in that gully where nary somebody passes, month in and month out, in a ole hut with nothin' but a dirt floor and no window; and chinks between the logs that you can put your hand into and her father the best-off man round yer! What you reckon he'd say if they was found froze plumb to death? And he such a powerful pious man and a-standin' way up high in the church! Free-handed too — where he takes a notion — givin' the preacher his rent free

and all the wood he's a mind to cut and haul and all the apples and corn and potatoes he's a mind to harvest; and a-pilin' up fodder stacks close to ole Mis' Jimson's fence and a-pullin' out a rail with his own hands so's her ole cow can get her head through and help herself.

"Carliny told me with her own lips that after she and her boy had come all the way from Yancey County — mighty nigh every step afoot too — her father wouldn't let her in. She wouldn't have come — for she's got along tollable since she's been a widow — only but she heard that he and Grover Cleveland wasn't doin' any good a housekeepin' by theirselves; and it hurt her powerful to think that her sister Missouri's little boy wasn't gettin' the right kind of care.

"Everybody's clean done out about it. The preacher, he set out

to labour with him, but Colonel Ledbetter he give him to understand that he was oversteppin' his authority and since then nary neighbour darst speak up. But I'd give a pretty to tell Colonel Ledbetter what *I* think of him, and I aim to do it this very night."

"Don't you, Suly; ole man Ledbetter ain't pleasant to talk to when he's riled."

There came the sound of some one tearing through the woods, and Thad brought Beauregard to a sudden stand. "Here we are," he shouted.

"You-all got him!" called a quavering voice out of the darkness.

"Got him sure-'nough, Colonel Ledbetter. Captured him way off down by the ford!"

"I been trampin' the woods for a hour lookin' for him and I'm hoarse as a crow callin' for him. Is he dressed up much?"

"Not much. Some durn fools would have took him for a ha'nt but I don't never run from nothin' and Suly here, she's some spunky too."

They drove slowly to the house the old man keeping abreast. The door stood open and from within shone the light of a flickering hearth fire.

Grover Cleveland shed his blanket, sprang over the wheel while it was yet in motion, and fled into the house and out of sight.

The old man chuckled. "The little feller's right much ashamed of hisself when he's found out in one of his spells. I reckon he cried some when you-all woke him up — he gen'ally does."

"Them that's had nothin' to cry for's the ones that's done the cryin'," teased Thad.

"I don't care if I did," said Suly preparing to accept the invitation to "stop in by a spell." "It must

be a mighty nasty feelin' to wake up in the woods at night and not know how you got there."

"So it is, so it is," said Colonel Ledbetter leading the way into the house. "I ain't no mind to be stern with him, for he comes true and honest by the trick. I done it myself when I was a boy."

He replenished the fire and lit a candle.

"He sleeps right there betwixt me and the wall," he pointed to a bed in the corner, "and I can't contrive how he manages to give me the slip so often; he's got some sort of sleepin' slyness that he ain't no more notion of when he's awake, than a angel. Barricadin' the door ain't no good. One night I tied him fast to my wrist so's he couldn't move without wakin' me up, but that seemed to hurt the little fellow's feelin's powerful an' I didn't try it again."

Nothing was to be seen of Grover Cleveland. Suly went to the bed.

"I should think he'd smother to death," she said, "he's drawed the Valley of the Mississippi clean over his head and he's fast asleep." She arranged a little breathing place for him.

The old man came and stood beside her.

"I helped quilt this quilt," she went on, carefully folding it away from the face of the child, "it was the first quiltin' party I ever went to and I took the tuck out of my frock to go. This was the first Valley of the Mississippi ever seen round yer and Missouri was mighty proud of it; she had the pattern sent from Georgy."

"Them blue pieces over there," said the old man, "is pieces of her frock; it was a store frock; and these yer streaked pieces on this side" (he traced them with an unsteady fin-

The girl had to stop beating the bush. "Carliny and Jakey ain't a-doin' any good up there, Colonel Ledbetter; they're both a-lookin' puny. She wants you and you want her, and Grover Cleveland, he wants her powerful, poor little soul! 'Tain't right, nor Christian, nor human, nor common sense, nor horse sense, nor nonsense, nor any kind of sense for you to be so set. She's your own flesh" — she stopped, awed by his steady stare at her.

"You go home," he said, "and you sew the tuck back into that ar frock you wore to Missouri's quiltin' and you wear it and be a little gal again till you're smart enough not to handle no such talk as that in my house. Carliny, she made her own bed and thar she must lie. I told her when she married that ar no-'count that she shouldn't never put foot into house of mine again; and you go ask your daddy if he

ever knowed a Ledbetter to go back on his word. And I'm bringin' up Grover Cleveland the same way; he believes like I do; he thinks Carliny'd ought to go her own gait now."

Arsula went out of the house with her hand to her eyes.

"I 'low you mean right," he said softening a little, "and I'm a heap o' times obliged to you for bringin' him home, but you ain't no call to go to interferin' in *my* family affairs."

All the next day Grover Cleveland hunted for his boots. "I sot 'em right here," he said, "and I ain't touched 'em since." In the house he had turned every thing over and over again, had gone through the barn and out-houses in the same way and at sundown was searching the woods when Arsula a-mule-back rode up to the house. Colonel Ledbetter was chopping wood but he put down his axe and went to her.

"I've come from Carliny's," she said, "and here's them blue-top boots. Carliny found 'em outside her door this morning and she'd no more notion than the dead whose they was or how they got there, till I told her 'bout last night."

The old man turned them in his hands confusedly. "If Grover Cleveland took these boots up thar last night," he said, "his sleepin' opinion is a heap different from his wakin' opinion. When he's awake he 'grees with me; he thinks if she was so set on goin' her own gait, now she'd ought to keep on goin' it."

Arsula rode off and he went into the house and tucked the boots out of sight.

By the by his grandson came in dispirited and weary, ate a little supper, and crept away under his side of the Valley of the Mississippi.

"He ain't eatin' as much as he'd

ought to," mused his grandfather as he scraped the remnant of their meal upon the hearth for Dixie. "If Missouri was alive she'd make somethin' to tempt his appetite, but I 'low I ain't got the sleight o' cookin'." He went to the bed and tucked the quilt closely about the child's shoulders.

"He'll lay quiet enough to-night; I never knowed him to get up two nights runnin'. Seem like he gets scairt and keeps still a spell. I'm mighty nigh beat out myself, bein' up so late yesterday evenin'; I reckon I can sleep without any rockin'," and he went to bed.

He awoke after a three-hours' nap. The room was cold and his first thought was to see if the Valley of the Mississippi was doing its duty by his grandson. It was not; and when he attempted to pull it into place he found there was no grandson there; neither did there appear

to be a complement of the Valley of the Mississippi.

"Grover Cleveland! Grover Cleveland!" he shouted and the only answer was a stampede of rats from the hearth. He got up, lighted his candle, and held it low over the bed. The boy was surely gone. He pulled the quilt toward him and as he did so the big old shears that served them in their various household operations fell to the floor. The quilt had been cut through from end to end; the side containing the striped pieces had been left in its place but the blue had disappeared!

He got into his clothes and hurrying out among the shadows of the moonlight night took his direction with the certainty of prescience. When he set foot upon the highroad, he began to follow by sight, for, excepting where the shadows were heaviest, he could discern the little

trudging figure of Grover Cleveland, its outline marred by something slung in man-like fashion across his shoulder and by the dog following closely.

He didn't try to overtake the child, but, though the road was crooked, he never let him get out of his sight for a second. Sometimes in dark, rough places the man stumbled. "Seem like some spirit's a-guidin' the boy," he said. "He don't 'pear to make a false step"; and, like Suly, he was awed.

As they neared the ford he lessened the distance between them but, though his heart stood still when the boy got upon the foot log (for the stream was running high) he made no sign but to take off his coat ready for a plunge if emergency called for it.

They crossed in close procession, the little sleeper, the dog, and the old man. Upon the other side the leader kept the highroad for a fur-

long or more and then, where a rough culvert conducted a small branch into the Junaluska, turned into a rocky gully and ascended by a rough, steep path, the others following. Two or three times Dixie, turning to the old man, entreated with tail and eyes for an explanation of these strange proceedings, but by pantomime was ordered into line again.

Upward and onward they went, no sound accompanying but the tramp of their feet, the rustle of leaves as some frightened animal darted from its lair, the gurgle of the brook, and the recoil of the low-hanging branches which two of them nimbly dodged, but the old man put aside with his hands.

At last they came out upon a table of shale, dry and white in the moonlight. On its edge, backed by a cliff, stood a forlorn cabin, built for a stable one might have thought, but for the pile of clay and stones

that showed at which end of it a chimney had once stood.

Straight up to its sagging door marched the little sleeper, laid the blue-blocked half of the Valley of the Mississippi upon the rotten step, and then — the silent procession "marched down again."

Next morning the sun was shining through the open doorway and Colonel Ledbetter with an awl and a waxed-end was splicing a strap when Grover Cleveland sat up in bed and rubbed his eyes open with his fists. Suddenly he shouted:

"Gran'daddy! gran'daddy! here's the Valley of the Mississippi cut plumb in half and your part's here and" — he wriggled to the floor and grabbed his gran'daddy by the shoulder — "where's my half gone to, gran'daddy?" Without waiting for an answer the child went back to the bed and made a more thorough examination.

"Gran'daddy! gran'daddy! don't you reckon 'twas a mighty low-down somebody to do that trick?"

"I 'low 'twas, Grover Cleveland — that is, if he knowed what he was doin', 'twas."

The boy's eyes grew bigger and bigger."

"Maybe you been a-performin' in your sleep again, Grover Cleveland."

"No I ain't gran'daddy, no I ain't," the blue eyes were very earnest. "I done been in bed close up to you all night."

"Maybe you have, Grover Cleveland, but 'pears like you overslept yourself a spell this morning. There's the pone and some bacon keeping warm for you by the fire."

Puzzled that his grandfather didn't take a more active interest in the calamity that had befallen him, the boy ran half-dressed to the door.

"Gran'daddy! gran'daddy! what

you got Bonaparte and Butterfly geared up to the cart for?"

"I been down to Junaluska. And now you eat your breakfast quick, and we'll go hunt up your half of the Valley of the Mississippi; and you put on them blue-top boots Grover Cleveland; them old shoes lets the water in."

"Why them boots is done gone!" he shook his grandfather as if to wake him up, "don't you 'member — oh-ee-ee," he went diving under the bed and, coming up again with the blue-tops hugged close to his breast and another pair in his hand, stood before his grandfather dumb as to the vocal organs but his eyes questioning wildly.

"Them red-tops is for Jakey."

"You aim to carry them boots up to him, gran'daddy?"

"No, gran'son, I aim to bring Jakey down to the boots."

In the Ledbetter home that

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afternoon Carolina dropped the broom as two little boys came frolicking about her, and capturing the larger one, she squeezed him rapturously!

"If you ever get out of this house at night again, Grover Cleveland," she said, "you'll be smarter than I am; that's what."

IV

OLD-TIME RELIGION

Autumn in the Southern Appalachians.

The little boy sat on the prize pumpkin that his grandfather had put in front of the house to challenge the comment of passers-by. He was chewing sorghum-cane and singing in snatches:

> "Give me that old-time aligion,
> Give me that old-time aligion,
> It is good enough for me.
> It was good for Paul and Silas,
> It is good enough for me——"

His Aunt Carolina stood on the porch spinning stocking yarn, while

near her sat his grandfather, cobbling shoes as diligently and contentedly as if born and bred to that lowly occupation instead of being a forehanded farmer holding county and township offices.

"Grover Cleveland certainly is a good singer," said Carolina. "He can carry the tune of every last hymn he hears 'em sing down to church and he can carry the words too, clean up to twenty verses I reckon, and what he can't remember he can make up."

The old man laid down his implements, bowed himself to his "studyin'" attitude, and looked fondly and proudly at his grandson. Carolina let her eyes range the high-road.

"Here comes old man Sumter a-drivin' that ar' Sal he bought over to Nantahala. She was round and plump as ary one of our mules when he brought her here, but now I declare

she's the gauntedest mule that travels the road. I reckon he's jerked and jawed the flesh right off her bones."

"You say Cap'n Sumter's a-comin'?" asked her father, and he got up and went out to the road side. At his signal his neighbour twitched Sal to a stand and stared at him without a relaxing line in his hard old face or a gleam of friendliness in his eyes.

Colonel Ledbetter had pleasant information to impart. He lifted one foot to the hub of the clumsy fore wheel, rested an arm across his knees and looked hard into the sandy road lest his eyes should forestall his tongue as the bearer of good news.

"You sold me them 'leven wa'nut trees on Sundown Hill for thirty dollars apiece, Cap'n Sumter?"

"I reckon that's 'bout how the case stands," the grim face looked steadily at the smiling one and not a line softened.

"Well, sir," the pleasant eyes looked up with a lively sparkle that might have been borrowed from Grover Cleveland's own, "I hadn't examined them trees as close as I ought to, and 'pears like you hadn't either; there's a little mistake about one of 'em and I expected we'd better rectify it right now ——"

"G'long!" old man Sumter hit the mule a "lick," saying viciously as she sprang forward, "You got the timber and I got the money and I don't rectify no mistakes now; you're old enough to have knowed what you was gittin' 'fore you paid for it."

"Jes' as you please Sam Sumter, jes' as you please"; the indignant old gentleman made a gesture as one who gladly washes his hands of a responsibility and yielding to curiosity Sumter turned toward him.

Colonel Ledbetter didn't pause

in his slow walk toward the house but he said in a tone of supreme indifference:

"I've had my men up there a-fellin' them trees and the biggest of 'em, the one furthest up the hill, is a curly walnut. Five years ago I sold one like it for twelve hundred dollars and I could have give you points 'bout sellin' yours; but seein' you don't rectify no mistakes, why that's all there is about it and we'll stick to the bargain."

Again Sal was jerked to a stand and twisting round on a pivotal hand pressed to the seat, old man Sumter regarded his interlocutor with intense concern. But Colonel Ledbetter proceeded to the house without looking right or left and, disappointed and ireful, his neighbour went on his way.

Colonel Ledbetter resumed his seat and his grandson came and leaned against him:

"Looks like he's plumb mad, gran'daddy."

"Yes he is, Grover Cleveland, he's plumb mad and he's been so ever since I've knowed him and that's mighty nigh sixty years. He's so rarin' mad that when the Lord throws a good thing in his way he's too mad to see it. Now like that ar wa'nut; any man that was a-lookin' out for virtues instid of *de*fects would have discovered that 'twas a curly. But old man Sumter's mad at every thing under the sun whether it's human or beast or tree or stone; and he's mad at 'em all the time and he's so mad that he won't take no notice to 'em. Jes' like he wouldn't take notice to me jes' now, when I was goin' to put more than a thousand dollars right into his hand; it would mighty nigh paid off that ar mortgage that he's been skinnin' himself to pay int'rest on these twenty

years — for he jes' keeps a-goin' behind and a-goin' behind for no airthly reason that I can see but jes' 'cause he's so mad all the time that he can't study any of the arts of peace. Why his very crops fails because he hates 'em so. Grover Cleveland, don't you never go to bein' mad at every body all the time. Tain't Christian, an' more'n that it kind o' spiles your aim so that you don't bring down no game."

"Was he borned that-a-way, gran'daddy?"

"I expect he was, Grover Cleveland, I expect he was."

"I'm mighty sorry for him"; the little fellow twisted his hands together and looked afar; "it's powerful mizzable to be borned with ways that you can't help."

The old man's attention and sympathy were his in an instant. "Don't you go to takin' on about sleep walkin', Grover Cleveland,"

he said drawing his arm tightly about the child; "you're bound to outgrow that before long."

"I paid him," the old man went on addressing his daughter, "I paid him more for them trees than ary other somebody had offered him, jes' because I was willin' to help make up to him the loss of his barn that burnt down; but he didn' thank me for it."

"What's curly wa'nuts good for, gran'daddy?"

"They're good for veneerin', Grover Cleveland. You see this is how 'tis: they don't saw the logs through like they do down to Campbell's saw-mill but they saw 'em, round and round, into sheets mighty nigh as thin as writin'-paper. There hadn't ought to be any cuts or holes in the log, so that they can make big smooth sheets of it, and they'll saw that log up till there ain't a core left that's as thick as my arm."

"What can they make out of timber as thin as writin'-paper, gran'daddy?"

Then to the extent of his own imperfect knowledge of the veneering process, the old man explained it to the child.

"So far as I know, there's only three veneering mills in the country. When I sold my tree I wrote a letter to all three of 'em and told 'em what I had to sell and they wrote back and made me a offer — only that Kentucky fellow, he's the nearest by and he made out like he had business in this direction and he stopped round to see it; and 'twas him I sold the tree to.

"And I aimed to work it jes' that-a-way for Cap'n Sumter; I aimed to write the letters for him — for he ain't a mite handy with a pen, Sam Sumter ain't (a education is a mighty handy thing to get hold of Grover Cleveland), and get in

the three bids for the tree and let him take up with ary one he see fit."

"You've sure done your duty by him now, daddy," said Carolina, "and that tree is yours anyway you can fix it."

"*Is* it yours, gran'daddy?"

"It's mine by rule o' law, Grover Cleveland, but I don't know as it's mine by that ar golden rule that you and Preacher Carr let on to know so much about."

His doting grandparent considered the child a prodigy of ethical understanding, or "jedgment," as he would have expressed it, and, although he was continually plying him with information and advice on all sorts of subjects, it was no uncommon thing for him to consult the little fellow even in matters of moment. It was as if he stored his maxims and admonitions into the laboratory of the child's mind and then requisitioned

it for them in convenient form for practical use.

"What's your opinion, Grover Cleveland?"

The child hesitated, his bright face raised earnestly to the grizzled one:

"Me and you, gran'daddy, me and you, we don't want anything that ain't sure 'nough ours; do we?"

"*No-o sir-ee!* That settles it, Carliny; Grover Cleveland and me we want a golden rule title to every thing we claim."

So Colonel Ledbetter got his ink bottle and pen off the shelf, a sheet and a half of writing-paper out of the front of the Bible, and three envelopes out of the back, and laboriously indited the letters to the veneering mills, while out in the shadow of the prize pumpkin his grandson cracked butternuts for the tame gray squirrels. But all the while new ideas were whirling through the little boy's head, and they concentred in that curly walnut.

That night "when there was naught but starre light" a little human figure, bareheaded, barefooted, and clad in a single, loosely hanging garment came out of the Ledbetter house. It proceeded noiselessly, though without stealth, for it kept in the open, taking the middle of the road with a free and fearless tread. Though the eyes were partly shut and the night was dark, it made no false or stumbling step; some intuition or spiritual sight or maybe an angelic presence was guiding it. Dixie came yawning and stretching to the edge of the porch, settled meditatively upon his haunches, watched it to the first bend in the road, then followed boundingly until he came abreast when, demurely dropping head and tail, he fell behind but kept so close that the little wind-blown shirt fluttered in his face.

When half a mile had been travelled

a branching wagon track, scarcely discernible even in the daytime, led up to some bars in the worm-fence that outlined the road. The little dreamer climbed over and took the rough road beyond without a sign of doubt or hesitation. It zig-zagged through the woods but steadily upward to where those walnut trees, with a goodly company of peers, oak, chestnut, and white-wood had crowned a summit. He had followed it a few times before, but wide-awake beside his grandfather in the ox wagon, with Butterfly and Bonaparte for motive power. It was overgrown with grass and weeds that shed their dew upon his little feet and perfumed them with pennyroyal and dittany, while overhead interweaving branches hid even the stars from sight.

Though tempted from duty's path by many a springing cotton tail, Dixie kept close behind his master

until the sound of an axe came thudding through the forest, at which he cocked his remnant for ears, stood for a second on the *qui vive*, then shot away in the direction of the sound.

He returned panting and, planting himself in front of the little sleep-walker, tried to head him in a different direction, but the child only swerved and continued his upward course. Again the dog headed him off, again and again until he had turned him quite out of the road way, but the boy threaded his way through undergrowth and over rocks and hummocks as easily as if he had been of spiritual rather than material substance.

Finally Dixie grabbed in his teeth the border of the little shirt and tugged so lustily that his master could not advance a single step farther, and as he tugged he whined in thorough frenzy; and if his lan-

guage could have been rendered into the vernacular it would have been:

"There's danger ahead, Grover Cleveland! There's a bad old man up there, a man that never sees me without making a lick at me with his stick, and if he does you mean and there's only I left to tell the tale, who'll I tell it to, I'd like to know? for there's not a human that's smart enough to understand *my* language, though I've understood English ever since I was a pup. Come back, Grover Cleveland! *come back, I say, come back!*" and with that last "come back," Dixie gave such a sudden and powerful jerk that Grover Cleveland came tumbling backward into a bed of galax.

He righted himself and sat there with a hand on either side pressing the leaves down into the turf, the dog crouched close with his paws

across the little bare knees and his tongue spasmodically licking the bewildered face.

The child heaved a slow, sobbing sigh or two and became his conscious self, a little boy alone at night in the dark, silent woods, frightened, not by darkness or silence or apprehension of danger, but by the thought of that mysterious power that could convey him so far from home and gran'daddy, and Aunt Carliny without any of their knowledge or consent. So he laid his head upon Dixie's neck and cried it out and then got upon his feet, once more a practical little mountaineer with a mind curious to see and to understand, a loving heart and willing, eager little hands and feet to wait upon its promptings.

He knew that downward must be homeward and cautiously (less confident now than when guided by that unconscious mentality) he began

to grope for his footing. Then again the sound of that axe came cleaving the silence and this time Grover Cleveland heard it as plainly as Dixie did.

He turned to investigate the phenomenon, Dixie following contentedly now that his master was himself again. The undergrowth had become thinner as they had ascended and soon they came out where great trees rose in stately exclusiveness unintruded upon by lesser growths. Here the darkness was less dense, stars looked down through rifts in the leafy canopy, and a little farther up the hill one fixed star gleamed scarcely eight feet from the ground as if intercepted upon an earthward trip and impaled upon a bough. It dispensed only a dim circle of light, but in it the boy could discern the figure of the wood chopper, could even catch an occasional glint reflected from the blade of the swing-

ing axe. He had come up against a fallen tree and he climbed up and sat upon the trunk, hugging his knees while he peered into the gloom.

All at once a suspicion of his whereabouts entered his head and to confirm it he got off the log and made his way to its larger end. Yes, there stood the stump from which it had been cut but recently and green chips littered the ground. He explored farther. Nearby lay another log, just over there another — why they were all about him! He knew perfectly well where he was. On old man Sumter's hill and these were his grandfather's walnut trees!

But that man! Why was he here in the dark, dark night chopping away with might and main? The boy made his way toward him, Dixie quiet but alert and as full of curiosity as his master.

That star was a lantern pendant

from a chestnut limb; its light shone upon the man's face. Why it was old man Sumter himself! and that log was the curly walnut, for it was the one highest on the hillside, and he was gashing it all along its length! And he was right mad at that curly too (just like gran'daddy said he was always mad at everything), for he kept talking right ugly to it!

"Hi!" the child sprang forward shouting to the full capacity of his sturdy lungs and caught the old man by the coat tails. "Wake up! oh, wake up! Don't you see what you're a-doin'!"

Grover Cleveland tugged and shouted, Dixie barked and leaped and growled and the echoes multiplied the tumult. Stunned by the suddenness of the attack the old man let the axe slip from his hand and backed round against the log. He was feeble, he had been exerting himself beyond his strength and he

was frightened too — had it not been for Dixie's very earthly performance he would have been sure he had met up with a ha'nt.

"What be you anyway?" he asked quaveringly, sinking to a seat upon the log.

"Why I'm Grover Cleveland, gran'daddy's grandson."

The boy looked the man over with a face full of compassion. Here was a big man afflicted just as he was, and that fellow-feeling that makes us all so wondrous kind enthralled him.

"Are you sure you're broad awake now?" he asked coming very close and laying his hand upon the old man's knee. "It's awful to walk in your sleep; I feel mighty sorry for you." He scrambled up on the log, wriggled himself as close to the night-walker as he could get, took a coarse, limp old hand in his, and patted it. "I certainly am sorry



"'What be you anyway?' he asked quaveringly, sinking to a seat upon the log"



for you 'cause I know jes' how it feels to be woked up in the dark, away off from home and not know how you got there. I walk in my sleep too — that's how I come out yer to-night — but you've got it worse than me, you have; for I don't do mischief when I'm took, but you — why-e-e-e!" twisting himself about and surveying the log — "you've done hacked your tree all to pieces and 'twon't be no more good for veneerin'! Gran'-daddy says they don't want nary snag in it.

"But maybe this ain't the curly," he peered eagerly into the woods; "it ain't 'less it's the furtherest one up."

"This is the curly wa'nut all right," growled Sumter with a malevolent twang unintelligible to the child.

"I certainly am sorry for you. Gran'daddy wrote three letters 'bout

this yer tree and he was goin' to turn the answers over to you so't you could take up with ary one you'd a mind to — that's what he said ——"

"You say he did? Didn't he 'low he'd bought the tree fair 'nough?"

"That ain't the way he thought about it — and me and gran'daddy, you know, we don't want anything that ain't sure 'nough ours; he said you could sell it for enough money to pay all you owed. He was plumb glad of it and now he'll be mighty nigh as sorry as you and me is."

For a moment sad, silent thought held sway.

"There's one good thing about it though," the child tucked his garment tightly under his knees, "you don't get out without dressin' yourself, the way I do; you ought to be glad about that. Gran'daddy says

there's always some good even in the baddest things if we watch out for it."

His companion made no response and the boy resumed his role of sympathizer.

"I reckon you was borned that-a-way, jes' like me, and it's powerful mizzable to be borned with ways that you can't help; and you ain't got any Dixie to watch out for you. And Aunt Carliny, she makes me sleep with her and Jakey, so's she can catch me at it, but I don't guess you've got any Aunt Carliny either."

"Naw," old man Sumter got up and reached for his lantern, "I ain't got nary somebody that cares what becomes of me."

The boy got down off the log and pityingly took his hand.

"Le's go home," he said, "I know where I be now an' if you're kind o' mixed up yet, why I can show you the trail," and he led away as

shamefaced an old sinner as ever trod the mountains.

(Seeing the pair on friendly terms, Dixie indulged in a brief interview with a 'possum.)

"As I was a-sayin'," comforted the child as they picked their way by the lantern's light, "it's powerful mizzable to be borned with ways that you can't help; but don't you go to takin'-on about it, for we're bound to outgrow it — so gran'-daddy says. And there's another thing where you're worse off than me: gran'daddy says you was borned mad at everybody all the time — that must be powerful mizzable too, but I reckon you'll outgrow that too."

They parted at Sumter's door and then Grover Cleveland and Dixie sped homeward. Noiselessly the little fellow entered the house, crept into bed beside his Aunt Carliny and straightway forgot his "mizzable" inheritance.

But he had it embarrassingly recalled to his mind next morning at breakfast when Aunt Carliny said as she gave him his second helping of hominy:

"Grover Cleveland's getting right good 'bout stayin' in bed o' nights; he ain't tried to get up in a dog's age. Of course he couldn't get up without my catchin' him, for I'm always sleepin' with one eye open, but seem like he don't try any more."

"I reckon he's outgrowin' them kind of capers," gran'daddy reached out, stroked the yellow pate and the yellow pate bent lower and lower and finally the whole boy went down under the table.

He next appeared tagging dumbly at the heels of the old gentleman as he was making his morning tour among his stock, who, when a sudden turn brought them into collision, reached behind him and brought the boy out of his obscurity.

"'Pears like you ain't a mite peart this morning, Grover Cleveland; you got something on your mind?"

The child bored the soil with his toes:

"I — wasn't in bed *all* night, gran'daddy, not *every minute*, I wasn't."

"You been a-walkin' in your sleep again?"

The child nodded guiltily and a very awkward pause ensued. Gran'-daddy looked serious, but as soon as distressful symptoms began to develop in the little culprit, he applied, as usual, the healing balm of consolation.

"I wouldn't take-on about it, Grover Cleveland, not a mite, I wouldn't, for you're plumb sure to outgrow it. Gran'daddy used to be up to them same tricks but he's outgrowed 'em. I jes' go to bed and I lay there as firm as a island in a goose pond and you couldn't

drag me out — not with Butterfly and Bonaparte you couldn't — not unless something was the matter with Grover Cleveland and *he* wanted me in the night; if he did, if he ever does, I'll shoot out of that bed like lightning out of a thunder cloud." And so he coaxed and petted until the shamed little face was ready to look the world squarely in the eyes again.

"Where was you at, last night, eh?"

"When I come to, I was up to Sundown Hill where them wa'nut trees is."

"Was you 'way off there, grandson?" Gran'daddy settled to a seat on a wagon tongue and put a snug arm about the boy who grew suddenly voluble in the recollection of stirring times.

"Hi, gran'daddy! Cap'n Sumter, *he* walks in his sleep jes' like me! He does a heap of things in his sleep! An' he talks right out loud too; that's a heap worse'n me, ain't it?"

"If he does it, it's a heap worse'n you. Did you meet up with him last night?"

"Why he was a-doin' mischief, *he* was! He was choppin' up that ar curly wa'nut and every lick he hit, he says, '*Now* will you bring twelve-hundred dollars for veneerin," and he chopped big holes in it!"

"*That curly?*"

"Ye-e-s, that ar one that lays furtherest up the hill."

The old man loosened his hold of the lad and rose slowly to his feet, a look on his face that Grover Cleveland had never seen there before and that he could only vaguely interpret, but it made him feel sorry for his companion in misery. So he took his grandfather's hand and as they walked toward the house he discoursed:

"He can't help doin' things in his sleep for he was borned that-

a-way, and he can't help bein' mad all the time for he was borned that-a-way too; and I reckon he feels mighty shamed of hisself now — that's the way I feel."

Receiving no response he squeezed the hand he held in both his own demanding recognition of his reiterated sentiment:

"It's powerful mizzable to be borned with ways that you can't help."

And gran'daddy replied:

"So it is, Grover Cleveland, so it is."

For two or three days the lives of our heroes ran along in the usual quiet channels, and then one morning Colonel Ledbetter drove up in front of Captain Sumter's broken-spirited-looking dwelling-place. On the seat beside him was a "city-dressed fellow" and Grover Cleveland swung his legs over the pendant tail board.

In response to a call old man Sumter appeared.

"This yer man" (the mountaineer is apt to be off-hand in his introductions), "is the owner of that veneerin' mill in Kentucky. He's come to look at that ar curly wa'nut and to make you a offer for it; and here's two letters from two other men that runs that kind of mills. One of 'em bids 'leven-hundred-an'-fifty dollars for it and the other a hundred or two more."

Sumter fumbled with the letters, affecting even more than his habitual gruffness.

"Looks like you ain't been to look at your property lately. That ar curly wa'nut ain't no good for veneerin' nor nothin' else; it's done chopped to pieces."

Apparently his neighbour was absorbed in switching a fly off the white mule's back, for he replied with his eye following the fly:

"I was up thar yesterday evening an 'twas all right then. You jump in thar 'long side of my boy and we'll go up and look at it," and the embarrassed old man got in because he didn't know what else to do or what to say.

When next they halted they were among the felled trees. It was strange, but Colonel Ledbetter's eyes never happened to light on that scarred log as he led his party past it and toward the summit of the hill.

"There's only ten trees lying here," he said, "that curly I left standing. Sometimes the man that buys it will give more for it that-a-way because he wants to have it cut particular; sometimes they count on gettin' root and all."

"Thar she is neighbour," he said to the Kentuckian, slapping the old tree's sides as proudly as if it had been a three-year-old thoroughbred and his own, "and if you don't 'low

she's a giant and a beauty, you want to go out of the lumber business."

He waited to hear his sentiment confirmed and then hand in hand with his grandson walked away leaving Sumter to make his own bargain.

"You see, Grover Cleveland," he said as they came up to the hacked log, "he was too mad to see straight and he lit on the wrong tree."

"Why gran'daddy, he was walkin' in his sleep!"

"Sure 'nough; gran'daddy plumb forgot *that* part of the story" — he sorted some chips about with the toe of his boot — "but, Grover Cleveland, don't you never go to actin' *that* spiteful, sleepin' or wakin'."

Two days afterward Sal stood sampling a pile of choice limber-twigs while her master sat on the Ledbetter porch. It is difficult to describe the expression of his hard old face. Its obduracy was there

but less marked; as if a thin lava-flow of astonishment had hardened upon his features.

"That thar feller," he said, "'lowed me fo'teen hundred dollars for the curly wa'nut and yesterday evening I druv over to the cou't-house and — nary man's got a nickel's worth of claim on my farm now."

Colonel Ledbetter grabbed his hand and shook it heartily.

"I certainly am glad, Sam," he said, "I certainly am."

"Looks like you think as you say, Jake." The old fellow hoisted himself on his feet and, after the distortions of figure necessary to get possession of his pocket-book, said: "Here's the thirty dollars you give me for the curly and here's another thirty for the log that got hacked." Without another word he stumped clumsily out to his wagon, Colonel Ledbetter following in a neighbourly way.

"That's a fine heifer you've got tied behind, Sam; tollable much Holstein in her, ain't there?"

"Looks like thar is; g'long!"

He turned into the road, but a second thought made him look back.

"See here"; Colonel Ledbetter went to him.

"That thar line fence that Higgins has been a-snarlin' 'bout for twenty year — he says it b'longs on my side the branch. It was on yon side when the property come into my hands but, 'cordin' to the records over to the cou't-house, looks like there's a chance of him bein' in the right of it. And I'm like you and Grover Cleveland, Jake; I don't want nothin' 'tain't mine. I don't reckon Higgins'll have anything to say to me, but if you're a mind to go over and talk to him 'bout it, we'll have it straightened out. G'long."

Over the hill he went, jerked Sal

to a stand in front of Mis' Jimson's log-cabin, clambered out of the wagon, and began to untie the cow. The old woman came limping down the walk with surprise but no welcome in her face.

"Where'll you have her?" he asked with his eyes on his fingers.

"Whatever do you mean, Sam Sumter?"

"Mis' Jimson, you 'lowed I'd put my brand onto the ears of your calf. This 'ere creeter run with mine up on the mounting the whole season and when they brought my cattle down she was with 'em; but if you say she's yours ——"

"She *is* mine, I know her by the shape of the white blanket on her back. 'Tain't hard to know your own when one is all you've got."

"Here she is," he opened the gate, put the animal into the yard and had regained his seat before she recovered her speech.

"How's all the folks, Cap'n Sumter?"

"Tollable; g'long!"

The cow was too wild to let her mistress come near so she stood and admired her afar off:

"Looks like the millenyum has done come," she said, "and I'm mighty glad I've lived to see it."

"Well what about it!" exclaimed Aunt Dicey the next Sunday, pointing to her dingy little wooden clock, "she's done stopped — a hour ago for all I know. We'll be late to church an' I wouldn't miss what Preacher Carr has got to say this mornin' — not for a pretty. Why, Zeb'lon, they're a-sayin' that ole man Sumter's sure 'nough got religion!"

"You say he has!" Zeb's tone was as wrathy as it was incredulous.

"Sure 'nough; Mis' Campbell says he's a-restorin' fourfold!"

"Thar's the old sinner now," grumbled Zeb; "talk about good folks and they're plumb sure to heave into sight."

"Well, what about it? He's a-drivin' up!"

"Hullo in there! Zeb'lon!"

Just within the door but out of the old man's sight, Aunt Dicey counseled her grandson:

"You speak him fair, Zeb'lon, for they say he sure has got religion; but I'll stand on the porch with the gun whar he can see me good; maybe that'll keep him from backslidin' all of a suddent."

They went out together. Zeb said "Mornin'" but his tone was not conciliatory.

"I've got a mighty pretty year-old colt up to my place; come of first-class Kentucky stock. If you're a mind to, you can come up and git him, to pay for that thar tame deer I shot. G'long!"

Church was "in" when Aunt Dicey and Zeb drove up, and before they had alighted and found a place to hitch among the two score beasts of draught or burden that were disposed in the surrounding woods, church was "out." But the congregation didn't disperse; they stood about in groups discussing the wonderful events of the past week. Preacher Carr came and stood in the doorway:

"Give me that old-time religion," he sang out lustily, and his people joined joyously in the refrain. Arsula Garrett always led the singing and she followed him with:

"It was good for the Hebrew children," and they kept on chanting the efficacy of the "old-time religion" in the case of "the prophet Daniel," "the good Elijah," "the psalmist David," "poor old Noah," "the patriarch Abr'ham," and, when they had exhausted Arsula's

list of sacred-history heroes, they sang:

"It was good for my old mother,"
"It will be good in the time of trouble,"
"It will be good when the world's on fire,"

and finally they rounded up the catalogue of human experiences and human apprehensions with:

"It will be good when I am dying,
It is good enough for me."

But Grover Cleveland wasn't ready to go home yet and, tugging at Arsula's skirt, he piped timorously:

"It will be good while I'm a-livin," — probably it was only dislike of the thought of dying that inspired his improvisation, but Arsula and the rest took it up with all their heart:

It will be good while I am living,
It is good enough for me."









